

writer who cares about beauty to turn anchorite and abandon the real world. An even worse alternative, common today, is to abandon beauty and pretend that Art is concerned with something else. Either is defeat; but it is easier to see the difficulty than cure it. The problem for the modern writer is to mix enough personal experience with his imagination; just as the problem for everyone else is to mix enough imagination with his personal experience.

In Flaubert, then, to resume, one of the fundamental things from the very first was a rage against life. 'J'ai eu tout jeune un pressentiment complet de la vie. C'était comme une odeur de cuisine nauséabonde qui s'échappe par un soupirail. On n'a pas besoin d'en avoir mangé pour savoir qu'elle est à faire vomir.⁵ Out of such bitterness there often comes a strength; and hatred nerved Flaubert to dissect and preserve for ever that undying worm, Homais. But there is a greater strength out of which comes, not so much sweetness (the word has a sickly sound), as a calmer and more smiling irony. The Shakespeare of *Hamlet* and *Antony and Cleopatra* seems to me a more perfect writer than the Shakespeare of *Lear* and *Troilus*. Though Flaubert preached impersonality in an author, he scarcely achieved it as Shakespeare does, because he lacked Shakespeare's wider, calmer sympathy. This eternal rebel alternately banished himself into far countries on the borders of unreality, and returned home to stab or jeer. In haughty contempt of life, he sacrificed everything to his Muse; but the Muse, like

other women,
does not love best those who sacrifice
most. It was,
indeed, a giant who could labour as he did,
year after
year, wrestling in agonies for twelve or
eighteen hours a
day to produce perhaps three sentences by
the end **of** it,
when another dawn glimmered grey
across the Seine